





Worthy Christian Testimony

AN ADDRESS

Delivered at the Annual Convention of Christian
Endeavor Societies, held in St. John's Church,
Dalhousie, N. B., on Tuesday,
Sept. 29th, 1892.

— BY —

Rev. W. J. FOWLER, B. D.



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Worthy Christian Testimony.

An Address delivered at the Annual Convention of
Christian Endeavor Societies, held in St. John's
Church, Dalhousie, N. B., on Tuesday,
September, 20th, 1892,

By Rev. W. J. FOWLER, B. D.

Testimony is the solemn declaration of a witness. Testifying is another name for witness bearing. A credible witness does not base his testimony upon his own feelings, desires, or opinions. He bases his testimony upon the truth.

The extent of his testimony is determined by his knowledge of the truth. The greater his knowledge of the truth is, the wider becomes the range of his testimony. A witness may be regarded as giving worthy testimony when he testifies not to his own individual opinion, desire, or feeling, but when he testifies to the truth. It is only when his feelings, desires, and opinions are themselves founded upon the truth and moulded by the truth that they may be said to come within the range of worthy testimony. And they are within that range just so far as they are true opinions, true desires, and true feelings.

You step into the court-room. A prisoner is arraigned on the charge of theft. A man comes forward to give his testimony concerning the prisoner at the bar of justice. Is he asked to give his individual opinion as to whether or not he thinks the prisoner guilty? Is he asked to express his feelings towards the prisoner at the bar? Is he asked to

state what he desires should be done with the prisoner? Assuredly he is not. What is required of the witness is that he speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." He is there not to speak about himself, or his feelings, opinions, or desires; but he is there to speak the truth in so far as he knows it concerning the prisoner at the bar of justice and the crime laid to his charge.

Apart from religion altogether; it may be seen that worthy testimony is based not upon human opinion, desire, or feeling, but upon the truth. It may further be seen that worthy testimony refers primarily not to self, but to another, or others.

While worthy testimony is based upon the truth, "worthy Christian testimony" is based upon the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. This at once shows that the Being around whom Christian testimony centres is Christ.

Jesus called upon His Apostles to bear witness of or testify concerning Him.

After the supper and previous to His agony in Gethsemane, Jesus said to the disciples: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me, and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (Jno. 15. 26. 27.) The Holy Spirit should bear witness of Jesus, and the apostles also should bear witness of Him. There should be the testimony of God and the testimony of man.

After the resurrection of Jesus, and previous to his ascension, he showed himself alive "by many

proofs," and spake unto the apostles "the things concerning the kingdom of God." He commanded them to wait at Jerusalem for the fulfilment of the Father's promise, and the last recorded words he spake previous to his ascension were: "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1: 7, 8.)

The great work of the apostles was to bear testimony concerning Jesus. They were to be His witnesses. Let us see how they fulfilled this mission. A necessary qualification on the part of the one appointed to take the place of Judas, the traitor, was that he should have companied with the apostles from the baptism of John to the ascension of Jesus, that he might be a witness of the resurrection of Jesus.

Hear the apostles on the day of Pentecost. They speak of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit; of Jesus as the Messiah foretold by David and "approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs;" but crucified by the Jews. And they say, "This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses."

When the lame man was healed, the multitude, "greatly wondering," crowded around Peter and John. The apostles took not to themselves the glory of this work. They testified that it was not by their own power or holiness the man had been healed; but that God had glorified his Son, Jesus,

whom the Jews had delivered up, denied, and killed; but God had raised him from the dead whereof they were witnesses.

Peter in speaking to Cornelius and his household said: "And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he which is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10: 43).

Paul regarded his preaching and teaching as testimony. "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church. He reminded them that he had served the Lord with humility, many tears, and temptations; and he said: "Ye yourselves know . . . how that I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20: 18-21). Thus did the apostles, in their preaching and in their teaching both in public and in private, fulfil their mission as witness-bearers of the truth as it is in Jesus.

When on earth Jesus called upon individuals to give their testimony concerning himself. When coming unto the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I the Son of Man am"? And when they had told him, he saith unto them, "But who say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16: 13, 16.)

Jesus said, to the man born blind whose eyes he had opened, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" When the man learned from Jesus who he was he made answer, "'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him." (Jno. 9: 38.)

When Jesus came to Bethany after the death of Lazarus, he saith to Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." (Jno. 11: 25-27).

Having been invited by Philip, Nathanael came to Jesus, saw him, talked with him, and testified; saying, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." And Stephen when about to be stoned said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7: 56.) Thus did individuals give their testimony concerning Jesus.

It is noteworthy that the Apostles and prophets, the Saints and Martyrs, as witness-bearers, kept the Lord Jesus Christ in the foreground, and self in the background. When they do refer to themselves, it is in the spirit of humility and not of self-assertion. John the Baptist, in speaking of Christ and himself, saith, "He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose" (Jno. 1: 27). And of Jesus he testified, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." And again, "I saw,

and bear witness, that this is the Son of God." Paul speaks of himself, as "the chief of sinners," as "the least of the apostles" who was not worthy to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God; and as "less than the least of all saints." What he was after his conversion, as an ambassador on behalf of Jesus Christ, he attributes to the unmerited favour of God, saying, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." His speech and his preaching revolved around one great centre. He wrote to the Corinthians: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Worthy Christian testimony is not self-exaltation. Many people, perhaps, think they are giving worthy testimony when they are talking about themselves, — their feelings, their doings, their goodness, etc. They may tell you how much better they feel now than they did a week ago, or a year ago; or how much better lives they are living now than they once were. The man who is always talking about himself shows that he is thinking about himself, and would also like others to think about him. I like to see the man who by his walk and conversation gives evidence of the fruit of the spirit. I like to see the man who is ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh him, "a reason for the hope that is in him with meekness and fear," but not with self-assertion. When you are trusting an earthly friend, you are not thinking about yourself; but, about the friend in whom you trust. When you are loving an earthly friend, you are not thinking about yourself; but,

about the friend whom you love. Even so when you are trusting in Jesus, you are not thinking about yourself; but, about him in whom you trust. When you are loving Jesus, you are not thinking about yourself; but you are thinking affectionately about Jesus. So, as a witness-bearer for Jesus, let your thoughts not be centred upon self; but, upon Him on whose behalf you testify.

Must not that man be a poor type of a Christian, who cannot be known as such by his daily walk and conversation; but who in order to be recognized as such must tell men that he is a Christian. Jesus in warning his disciples against false prophets, said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7: 16-20.)

When Peter and John had healed the lame man, they were brought before the council. Here, they did not talk about the great power they exercised as miracle-workers, and what good men they were; but, they testified that the impotent man had been made whole, "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." Although the Council was chiefly composed of those who were enemies to the cross of Christ, yet they needed not the testimony of Peter and John that they were the followers of Jesus. But the council, perceiving the boldness of Peter and John, marvelled and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

There is a kind of testimony that is full of self,

but has in it none of Christ. Sometimes such arrogates to itself the name of "perfection," while in reality it is self-glorying, self-exaltation, spiritual pride. Flee such testimony. Mark those who use it. They may be likened to an apple, which presents a very beautiful appearance from without, but it seems to ripen prematurely, and drop to the ground. You pick it up, cut it open, and, lo! all its beauty is on the outside—it is rotten at the core.

There is a kind of testimony that is "none of self but all of Christ," and it is lovely and of good report. It is the testimony of prophets and apostles, of saints and martyrs. It is the testimony of the faithful in the past and in the present. It is the testimony of those who with Paul "forgetting the things that are behind reach forth unto those things that are before;" and, who count all things as refuse that they may win Christ, and be found in him, clothed with his righteousness. (Phil. 3: 13, 8, 9). It is the testimony of those who boldly declare the truth and defend the truth as it is in Jesus; and who like Peter and John manifest even to the men of the world that they have been with Jesus. It is the testimony that has Christ Jesus and him crucified as its centre, the witness of the Holy Spirit as its ground of assurance, the truth of God as its basis, the fruit of the Spirit and a walk and conversation becoming a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus as its manifestation to the world.

May the God of all grace grant you grace, that in the light of His truth, and by the aid and guidance of the Spirit of Truth you may testify to the Truth as it is in Jesus.

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